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Committee on Conferences
Substantive session

Draft report

Addendum

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II. Control and limitation of documentation

C. Access to the optical disk system

Introduction and overview

1. At its substantive session in 1998, the Committee on Conferences welcomed the efforts of the Secretariat to improve access to the optical disk system (ODS), in particular the establishment of additional ODS centres.

2. At its 418th meeting, on 30 August 1999, a concern was raised regarding problems related to access to the optical disk system at the United Nations Office at Vienna. In response to this concern, the Committee on Conferences decided at the same meeting to add a new sub-item (e), entitled "Access to the optical disk system", under agenda item 3, "Control and limitation of documentation". Since it was a technological issue, a representative from the Secretariat would be requested to address the Committee. The Committee considered this sub-item at its 422nd meeting, on 1 September 1999.

Discussion

3. The view was expressed that difficulties were experienced with the optical disk system at the United Nations Office at Vienna in connection with delays in the retrieval of documents, power outages, overloading of the system, registration of new users and communication with Headquarters, despite assurances from the Secretariat at the Committee's last substantive session that those problems would be rectified.

4. The view was also expressed that no budgetary provisions were made for ODS in the next biennium.

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5. The representative of the Secretariat gave a brief history of the existing structure of ODS, which was no longer capable of covering the unexpectedly increasing number of documents and users. He also drew the attention of the Committee to the feasibility study being undertaken by the Information Technology Services Division to overhaul the existing system. Regarding access, the network that connected the various duty stations, in particular Geneva and Vienna, was being significantly upgraded.

6. The representative of the Secretariat also drew attention to the human elements involved in the process, for example, the issue of indexing, which might cause delays in the availability of documentation. It was hoped that these errors could be eliminated by additional automation. Regarding the registration of users, the Secretariat assured the Committee that this problem would be looked into.

7. With regard to budgetary provision, the representative of the Secretariat informed the Committee that an amount of $600,000 was included in the proposed programme budget for the Information Technology Services Division for the biennium 2000–2001 for the overhauling of the optical disk system as a whole.

Conclusions and recommendations

8. The Committee took note of the information and clarification provided by the representative of the Secretariat.

9. The Committee recommended that sub-item 3 (e) on access to the optical disk system remain under review by the Committee.